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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria)

- General exchange of views (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (continued)

Mrs. PEÑA (Nicaragua) (interpretation from Spanish): I greet you, Sir, and congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. Your diplomatic skill and well-known experience guarantee us success in our work. My greetings go also to the other Commission officers and to the members of the Secretariat staff.

At last May's session of the Disarmament Commission encouraging efforts were made to seek better and more effective working methods; we hope to refine and complete them this year. That rationalization should take account of what we view as a more propitious political climate for promoting general and complete disarmament and should take advantage of the capacity for action both within the United Nations and in an international context.

We wish once again to reiterate that the contributions of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Galapagos Declaration and the declaration of the Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic effectively demonstrate the determination of the peoples and Governments of Latin America to protect our hemisphere from the disaster of a nuclear war.

My country is optimistic and deeply respectful towards the future of the United Nations and pays a tribute to the Organization for its contribution to the democratization and pacification of Central America.

In our part of the world it is no longer possible to revert to old concepts of regional security. On the contrary, we are building a new model in which the old parameters will gradually have to give way, as did the walls that prevented change in Eastern European societies.

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

We are convinced that the principle of a reasonable balance of forces for defence must in future become a universal standard. For Nicaragua, development and security are inseparable elements in our conception of this new model of national and regional security. We have seen that the lack of basic rights such as freedom, health, education and a minimum income poses a serious threat to peace and stability in our countries.

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

Beginning with the presidential summit of Esquipulas II, we Central Americans have taken our fate into our own hands and have set forth guidelines for consolidating peace, democracy, freedom and development. Nevertheless, progress is fragile. Peace is not yet complete, and its achievement will depend on the solution found for situations which may engender violence. In Nicaragua, for example, the defusing of the mines found in the areas bordering on Honduras and Costa Rica and the complete disarming of the civilian population are high priority issues. My Government has requested the Secretary-General's assistance in obtaining the cooperation of some friendly countries in meeting the first of these objectives.

Since the first meeting of the Security Commission of the Esquipulas Agreements, held in San José, Costa Rica on 31 July 1990, we Central Americans proclaimed as one of our objectives that of defining a new model in the security relationships among Central American States. This model was to be based on cooperation, co-ordination, communication and prevention. At that time, we stated that no force should be of an offensive nature, nor should it be a threat to neighbouring countries. This regional concept must be closely linked to the concept of regional security. It was also our intention to establish a reasonable balance of forces which would help to bring about a higher degree of confidence and security in a region which is in transition between war and peace, through democratic processes which need to be consolidated, improved and supported with concrete social and economic progress.

We have undertaken these negotiations on security in the midst of far-reaching internal political changes and international economic conditions which, despite the adverse nature of some of their elements, seem to herald

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

the beginning of an era in which respect for international law and, in particular, the peaceful settlement of disputes among States will prevail.

Central America could become an example of persistent efforts to bring about lower levels of military budgets and military forces, which went from 90,000 to 28,000. It will continue to strengthen civilian structures in order to support democratic values and to reduce, as far as possible, levels of weapons.

In the joint declaration of the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier, and the President of Nicaragua, Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, who met in Managua on 30 and 31 January 1991, both Presidents stated:

> "We reiterate the firm decision of our Governments to promote the demilitarization of Central America. In this spirit, we have agreed to join our efforts to ensure that negotiations dealing with security, verification, monitoring and limitation of arms and military forces may be concluded as quickly as possible with the signing of an agreement in this important field."

At the closing of the fourth meeting of the Security Commission, held in Managua in mid-April, the Ambassador of Costa Rica to Nicaragua transmitted to our President, Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, an inventory of equipment, weapons and facilities and an enumeration of personnel in the military and security forces of his country. Finally, only a few days ago, on 16 April, during her visit to Washington, the President of Nicaragua, in her own name and in the name of the President of Costa Rica, officially transmitted the inventories of Costa Rica and Nicaragua to Mr. Baena Soarez, Secretary-General

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of the Organization of American States in his capacity as custodian, together with the United Nations, of the inventories of both countries.

In Nicaragua we feel deep admiration for societies which are moving towards progressive demilitarization. That is why we look forward to a Central America which will be increasingly civilian and peace-loving within the framework of existing commitments, while respecting the right of all nations to participate in that effort in accordance with their own realities, that is, exercising their own sovereignty.

The Central American Security Commission held its fourth meeting in our capital, Managua, on 12 and 13 April. That meeting was an especially important effort towards more substantive negotiations. In the course of the work carried out by that Commission, interest in receiving a complete and detailed report on the work on verification entrusted to the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) was expressed to the chief of the ONUCA mission in Central America. In this regard, Nicaragua considers it vitally important for the United Nations to play a role in strengthening the verification mechanism in border areas in order to increase the effectiveness of that task and to prevent the illegal arms traffic in our region.

In like manner, the Commission, together with the representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, analysed support for the tasks of mine-sweeping and disarming of civilians. In particular, it was decided that the secretariat pro tempore should request of the Secretaries-General of the aforementioned organizations that they use their good offices with those Governments which may be able to assist Central

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

American countries with training, as well as with the supply of equipment for mine-clearing tasks. The secretariat pro tempore would also request support of third countries for financing mechanisms which would be an incentive for the surrender of weapons.

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

The Security Commission, in turn, asked the Technical Subcommission to continue its work related to the assessment and establishment of maximum limits, as well as verification and control. To that end, the Technical Subcommission will meet in Managua on 7 and 8 May this year. After receiving the results of its work, the Security Commission will decide either to adopt the factoring system proposed or to find another system that can better achieve the aim of establishing a reasonable or a proportional balance of forces.

In discussing the question of submitting the inventory of equipment, weapons and installations and the census of personnel of the Central American countries' military and security forces, the Commission decided not to adjourn this fourth meeting of the Security Commission so that it could continue its work in Guatemala City during the month of June this year and fulfil the commitments agreed to in Tegucigalpa.

Nicaragua believes that the strengthening of peace in our region requires firm support for the purposes set forth by the Central American Presidents as well as steady progress towards an effective and reasonable balance of forces in the region. For Nicaragua to comply with that objective, an orderly programme of occupational reconversion of retired army personnel will be required, as well as respect for the programmes designed for the incorporation of the irregular forces that have been demobilized and integrated into a productive civilian life.

We have chosen the path of consensus as the only path towards the solution of our regional problems. Nicaragua is a country that, having lived through the tragedy of war and confrontation among its citizens, today attaches the greatest value to its commitment to building a civil, peaceful

(Mrs. Peña, Nicaragua)

and highly democratic society in which weapons will be replaced by actions aimed at dialogue and understanding, and confrontation will be replaced by the desire to cooperate and defend peace.

In conclusion, I wish to quote the following from the address delivered last week in Washington by our President, Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro:

"If I have buried the weapons in Nicaragua, it has been in order to uproot the great temptation to engage in militarism that has so often thwarted democracy in our country. Each rifle meant at least one life lost. That is why, instead of burying our sons, I wish, as a symbol of the new Republic, to bury weapons forever."

Mr. PAC (Poland): I take great pleasure in associating the delegation of the Republic of Poland with those delegations that have already extended congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Your personal qualities and skills and the role that your country, Austria, has been playing in the area of regional disarmament in Europe by hosting the Vienna negotiating process augur well for the success of the effort the Disarmament Commission is now undertaking. In the discharge of your important mandate you will have my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I should like to address words of appreciation also to the outgoing Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia, for his great contribution to the revitalization of the Commission. My delegation warmly welcomes the rationalization of the Commission's agenda. We also attach prime importance to the reaffirmation of the principle of consensus in its decision-taking.

(Mr Pac, Poland)

The delegation of Poland fully agrees with the succinct observation by the representative of the Republic of Hungary, Ambassador Erdös, on the momentous significance of transformations under way in Europe at the threshold of a new decade. The peaceful change of systems in Eastern and Central Europe, once deemed inconceivable without a major confrontation, marks the emergence of a new code of conduct in the community of nations. At a time when respect for international law, sovereignty and the equality of States are becoming part and parcel of international relations, it was also heartening to see the concerted action taken by the five permanent members of the Security Council in order to uphold the rule of law and the Charter of the United Nations in the case of the aggression against Kuwait by its neighbour. The resolution of the Gulf conflict is, in our view, indicative of the growing role of the United Nations in all areas, including disarmament.

In regard to disarmament, Poland has always set great store by the deliberative role of the Disarmament Commission, which can only be enhanced by the pragmatic approach it is now taking to its agenda items.

Let me comment briefly on the question of objective information on military matters. It has been my Government's policy to seek to stabilize the numerical factor of the military potentials of European States at the lowest possible level and to open such potentials to the scrutiny of others. The rationale behind that policy, apart from the desire to strengthen our national security, is the wish to proceed to the restructuring of our armed forces in a steady and determined fashion and to adapt our military potential to the requirements of a new, defensive doctrine now being drawn up.

Practising what we preach, we have rendered our military spending totally transparent by publishing last year the relevant information in accordance

(Mr Pac, Poland)

with the United Nations system for standardized reporting of military expenditures. Another such report is now being prepared. Like other States parties to the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Poland provided, during the signature of the Treaty, notification to all other States parties of the maximum levels of its holdings of conventional armaments and equipment limited by the Treaty.

(Mr. Pac, Poland)

I should like to conclude by making one or two comments on the question of the regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security. It can be readily understood that members of this Commission tend to be wary of a single approach to regional disarmament, let alone of the imposition of any one model on other regions. The solution incorporated in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe model, however, has been the only workable model so far. As my good friend, the representative of the Netherlands, rightly noted in his intervention yesterday, it exemplifies what can be achieved between countries long held apart by historical division but fundamentally united by a common set of values.

Now, in the view of my delegation, this achievement should not, perhaps, be dismissed without first being thoroughly examined. It should be the common goal of all members of the Disarmament Commission to seek any solution so long as it is or may be effective in any part of the world.

Mr. HOU Zhitong (China) (interpretation from Chinese): At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, the representative of friendly Austria, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. I am convinced that, with your rich diplomatic experience, skill and devotion to the cause of disarmament, you will successfully guide this session to positive progress. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau upon their elections. The Chinese delegation is ready to cooperate constructively with you, the Bureau and with other delegations. At the same time, I am pleased to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia, for his contribution during the last session.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

I would also like to point out that Mr. Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and his officials have provided us with valuable support. The presence here of Ambassador Komatina, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, has also strengthened our confidence in success. Please allow me to extend my appreciation to both of them.

This important gathering is being held against the backdrop of major and profound changes in the international situation and world structure. The old world structure has disintegrated while a new structure has yet to take shape. The world has entered a period of transition from the old structure to the new.

In recent years, the world has witnessed more relaxed United States - Soviet relations, a lessening of military confrontation, the easing of some regional conflicts and an emerging trend towards multipolarization. These developments have been welcomed by the international community. At the same time, it is clear that the world remains far from peaceful and people throughout the world still face grave challenges. Acts of hegemonism and power politics continue to take place. Peace and development are under threat. Various political, economic and ethnic contradictions have yet to be eliminated. North-South contradictions have become more acute. The loss of the balance of forces has given rise to new contradictions. With old contradictions interwoven with new, the international situation has become even more turbulent.

In this period of transition in the world structure, there is growing concern over such issues as peace and development, security and disarmament and the future direction of our world. The establishment of a just,

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reasonable and new international political and economic order has become the demand of the times. Now, what kind of new world order should be established? In our view, the following important common understanding and code of conduct should be emphasized and established.

First, in the new type of international relations, the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence must be strictly observed. These principles not only outline the most fundamental norms governing international relations, they are also in full accord with the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, thereby reflecting the essential features of the new world order.

We stand for the establishment of a new world order on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, an order entirely different from the old order based on hegemonism and power politics.

Secondly, the core of such a new order is that all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are members of the international community, equal in sovereignty, entitled to participate in the settlement of world affairs, and such practices as the big bullying the small, the strong lording it over the weak and the rich oppressing the poor should be effectively rejected.

Thirdly, the essential content of the new world order is, inter alia, that each and every country has a right to choose, independently, its own social, political and economic system and course of development in the light of its specific conditions. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, nor seek to impose its own values, ideology or mode of development on others.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

There must be mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity in international relations. No country should invade or annex the territory of other countries on any pretext. International disputes should be settled in a fair and just manner through peaceful negotiation rather than by the use or the threat of use of force - let alone by means of war.

A world order of this kind, which would undoubtedly be in the common, fundamental interest of the peoples of all countries, would surely help bring about lasting world peace and security and facilitate the joint development of all countries. However, its establishment represents a great and arduous task, and will be a tortuous historical process.

China will, as always, continue to pursue an independent foreign policy of peace, and to establish and develop friendly relations of cooperation with other countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. China, being a member of the international community, is willing to work with other countries in an unswerving effort for the gradual accomplishment of this historical task.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

At this critical juncture of opportunities and challenges, it is of great importance to enhance the status and role of the Commission. As the only authoritative and widely representative deliberative body on disarmament matters in the United Nations, it is the Commission's historic mission to promote disarmament and security. It should proceed from the common fundamental interests of all countries, base its work on realities while setting its sights on the future, and formulate guiding principles of disarmament and security that are truly conducive to the establishment of a new world order. In this connection, we hope that the reformed Commission will live up to general expectations and play a greater role with renewed vitality.

The positive results achieved by the Commission in its work over the years have set the stage for achieving the aforementioned objectives. The four agenda items to be addressed this year are topical issues concerning peace and security and have attracted wide attention from the international community. The Chinese delegation would like to state its principled positions on them and share its views with other delegations in a constructive manner.

The relevant United Nations resolutions and the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament have all emphasized that nuclear disarmament enjoys the highest priority in the field of disarmament. Therefore, at the current session, the agenda item on the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons, should receive the attention it deserves. The United States and the Soviet Union have reached certain

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

agreements in principle on the reduction of their stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons, which is a welcome development.

However, this step is both preliminary and limited. The two countries themselves have admitted that an impasse has recently been reached in this area. Therefore, as the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade emphasizes, in the nuclear field we must continue urgently to seek early reductions and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. The key to achieving this objective lies with the super-Powers, which possess the largest nuclear arsenals. They must discharge their special responsibilities in earnest by taking the lead in halting the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and in drastically reducing by an early date all types of nuclear weapons they have deployed at home or abroad. This will create conditions for convening a broadly representative international conference on nuclear disarmament with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States.

Resolution 45/58 D, adopted by consensus at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, embodies this common aspiration and demand of the international community in this regard. We have always held that, before the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world is possible, some nuclear disarmament measures should and can be adopted. For instance, all nuclear-weapon States should undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Nuclear-weapons-free zones and zones of peace should also be established. We hope that deliberations in the nuclear working group will reflect the common will of the international community and help to bring about genuine progress in nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

The consideration of the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields should proceed from objective realities and focus on opposing the use of science and technology in an arms race. The qualitative arms race between the major Powers, which possess the largest military arsenals and militarily-related scientific and technological capacity, poses a threat to world peace and security. Therefore, halting such an arms race and achieving nuclear and conventional disarmament are important ways of preventing the use of science and technology for the purposes of war and of promoting international security.

Meanwhile, we should ensure that science and technology are used for the benefit of mankind, fostering the economic and social development of various countries. There should be extensive international exchanges and cooperation in the scientific and technological field so as to promote international security, stability and development.

China attaches importance to the issue of regional disarmament and has always held that bilateral, regional and multilateral disarmament efforts are mutually complementary. We believe that, in light of specific regional conditions, the participation of countries in a given region in appropriate regional disarmament efforts will help ease regional tension, enhance regional peace and stability, and have a positive bearing on peace and security in other regions and in the world at large.

Given the current state of world armament, the focus of regional disarmament should be those areas where armaments are highly concentrated. Resolution 45/58 C, also adopted by consensus at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, reflects this common view of the international community.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

We are living in a diverse world in which each region has a distinct historical, political, economic and social development background. There is simply no universal model that can accommodate such diversity. Disarmament arrangements for different regions will be feasible only when they are made in keeping with specific regional conditions.

Our world is one, and international peace and security are indivisible. Therefore, in addressing regional disarmament issues, the regional dimension should be placed in its proper global context. In fact, regional disarmament should accord with specific regional conditions and require efforts on the part of the relevant major Powers outside the region to create suitable conditions. Meanwhile, regional disarmament agreements and arrangements should not compromise the security interests of other regions and countries.

The exchange, as appropriate, of objective information on military matters in the light of the specific conditions of various regions and countries is conducive to enhancing the necessary openness and transparency, and as such has a certain positive significance. Such an exchange is not an end in itself; rather, it should serve to promote the security of all countries and to advance the disarmament process. Therefore, the exchange should be based on the principle of undiminished security.

The exchange of objective military information should be done in keeping with the United Nations Charter and with the five principles of peaceful coexistence. In view of the vast differences in the specific conditions of the countries and regions concerned, it is natural that the exchange will be different in terms of modality, scope and extent. It is inconceivable to use one model for all situations. It should be stressed that countries with the

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largest and most sophisticated military arsenals, as well as members of military alliances, should take the lead in making their objective military information public and transparent to the international community so as to remove people's anxieties and increase the general sense of security at the international level.

As mankind marches into the 21st century, the 1990s is an important period in history. The task of the Third Disarmament Decade is heavy and arduous. It is intrinsically related to the establishment of a new international order. We are confident that the world's future is bright, and that with the concerted efforts of peoples throughout the world, a new international order more conducive to the development of countries in peace is bound to emerge. Our Commission should and certainly can make its due contributions to a cause of such long-term significance. The Chinese delegation will participate actively and constructively in the deliberations of the Commission and submit working papers as our work proceeds. We will work together with other delegations in a joint effort to enable the Commission fully to play its important role.

Mr. LUNA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, it gives my delegation great pleasure to convey to you our sincerest congratulations on your unanimous election to preside over the current session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Having served with you at other important meetings we are well aware of your excellent personal and diplomatic skills, which augur well for our work. I should also like to thank delegations for having elected my country a Vice-Chairman of the Commission, an election that we regard as a recognition of Peru's commitment to international peace and security and as an encouragement to continue to work for those noble ideals. I congratulate the other officers of the Commission on their elections and express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its work and for the invaluable support it gives us in our deliberations.

In my delegation's view, this year has witnessed the opening of new horizons for the Disarmament Commission. We have been given an opportunity to meet the challenge of revitalizing the Commission and bringing it into line with the important role it should now play in dealing with international disarmament problems. This forum, which has constantly been accused of inaction and long-winded discussion, is today a privileged forum for debate in which all States Members of the Organization can exchange views and openly present their positions within the framework of a frank and democratic dialogue.

However, I am bound to note that while previous sessions of the Disarmament Commission have often indeed been marked by insipid, drawn-out debate, it was the result of an international situation that was fraught with ideological and military struggles between the super-Powers and their military blocs.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

Although the international situation has been marked by a positive change in super-Power relations that has led to an almost total elimination of both the physical and strategic obstacles that have kept mankind poised on the brink of its own destruction, we have also witnessed in recent days a conflict which, though limited, has had consequences that affect the whole of the international community - consequences that have to a certain extent revived the fears we had hoped had been left behind.

That momentous event has confirmed us in our belief that the work of the United Nations must be focused on the implementation of preventive measures so that we do not have to resort to corrective ones. How often had the international community appealed for an end to the arms race and for concrete measures to achieve regional disarmament, transparency and an end to the transfer of conventional weapons, as well as the often covert transfer of state-of-the-art technology. Had those appeals been heeded, it might have been possible to avoid the recent conflict, which has brought so much suffering to the States concerned. However, that does not exempt the aggressor State from its responsibility in the crisis.

Many States have made divers specific proposals with regard to these questions. On occasion, however, subtle arguments have been put forward about the inapplicability of such proposals. The arguments were rooted in outmoded concepts of security, betraying backward attitudes that have long been overtaken by present-day facts.

The events in the Persian Gulf must be regarded as a tragic illustration of the fact that the world is not divided into rich and poor or large and small, but that it is a collection of States, nationalities, ethnic groups, religions and so on that cannot be forced into categories or systems. It is therefore necessary for us to engage in open dialogue, on an equal footing and

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with deep respect for the unique qualities of all. In this connection we are firmly convinced that this forum is not a superfluous body but a positive and guiding one. That, indeed, is our principal reason for contributing to the Commission's work.

The four agenda items assigned to the Working Groups for discussion this year are important because of their topicality and currency; they also touch upon a broad variety of closely interrelated elements. We believe that our discussions and possible agreements can actively contribute to subsequent consideration of these subjects in other forums by providing general guidelines and especially by identifying specific aspects. It will be understandable, therefore, if discussions in the various Working Groups overlap somewhat. That would in no way imply any duplication of work but would merely serve to confirm the inherent interrelationship among the items to be considered.

My delegation believes that none of the agenda items on disarmament and security can be restricted to a single path. On the contrary, they are all interdependent, since security itself must be understood as a multifaceted concept that therefore lends itself to a variety of analytical criteria, ranging from purely military questions to issues related to development.

With respect to objective data on military matters we believe that the subject cannot be categorized as a disarmament measure per se, nor can disarmament processes be made dependent on it. Nevertheless its consideration can indeed make a valuable contribution as an important confidence-building measure essential to any future negotiating process on disarmament or arms control. As for Peru, my Government is studying the standardized reporting system proposed by the United Nations Secretariat, which we feel has a central role to play in all such processes.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

The question of nuclear disarmament continues to be of the utmost concern to States and to the international community as a whole. While the risks of nuclear conflict have diminished, the existence of vast arsenals of such weapons, the continuation of nuclear testing, in some cases beyond the borders of the nuclear Power, the circumstance of countries' not having submitted their nuclear installations to the safeguards and inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the non-recognition of regions that have been declared nuclear-weapon free by sovereign decision of the States comprising them, the obstacles erected against zones of peace and cooperation - these are some of the central concerns we have with respect to nuclear disarmament.

The international community recognizes agreements between the super-Powers and the benefits that accrue from them. However, we are firmly convinced that all States, be they nuclear or non-nuclear, have the right to demand a future free from nuclear weapons. We intend to cooperate towards that end. We therefore believe that initiatives in the nuclear field put forward by non-nuclear developing countries should not automatically be greeted with apprehension or rejected out of hand. In this connection we demand full respect and, above all, the same rights and validity we are accorded when we sign or ratify international agreements of this sort.

With respect to the regional approach to disarmament, the position of Peru is widely known: We believe regional rapprochement to be one of the most important steps towards global disarmament.

More than 15 years ago Latin America and the Caribbean region set an example in the field of regional nuclear disarmament by the decisive adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Later, in the Declaration of Ayacucho, we initiated steps towards regional conventional disarmament. To this we should

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add the other regional, subregional and bilateral declarations that have contributed to this process. We are therefore speaking with full knowledge and on the basis of a wealth of experience.

Thus, we are convinced that the spread of possible disarmament processes to various regions of the world would be a concrete and complementary contribution to general and complete disarmament.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

We believe it to be very important to bear in mind, as part of this process, the peculiarities and specific situations of each region. However, they should not be obstacles to regional disarmament processes. Rather, they should be viewed as factors in a delicate situation, to be taken into account in the most appropriate way when the general principles of such a process are applied and its objectives are sought.

In conclusion, we believe the question of science and technology is especially important, given the frenzied development of arms and the transfer of state-of-the-art technology. The unimaginable sophistication of weapons and their increased capacity for death and destruction are paradoxical. As a peace-loving country, we are convinced that if technical, financial and, above all, human resources were better used, the situation of the developing countries would not be as tragic as it is now.

As a result of the Gulf conflict we have been able to appreciate that there is a third-world market for military technologies from the developed countries. However, the same situation does not apply to advanced technology or scientific cooperation for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, a series of obstacles then arises to prevent such transfers, which obviously do not involve the same risks as military technology.

Therefore, we believe it is necessary to provide guidelines for the transfer of technology. Here the developed countries bear a special responsibility, since it is they who almost exclusively develop, use and transfer such technology.

I wish to repeat my delegation's commitment to contribute to effective work by the Commission and to a successful conclusion to our labours. We are aware that the Commission's restructuring will succeed only on the basis of

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the work and dedication of the delegations present. A procedural step has been taken. However, we must emphasize that progress in our work will depend on how we link it with the real negotiating process, correctly identifying it with current trends in the international system and making it compatible with the work of the political body, the First Committee of the General Assembly, and the negotiating body, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. All this will contribute to an effective, necessary pragmatism, which will have a positive impact on the multilateral treatment of disarmament questions.

Mr. KRASULIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): First, Sir, I wish to extend the sincere congratulations of the Soviet delegation to you on your election as Chairman of the Commission at its present session. We are sure that your wealth of diplomatic experience, which you once again demonstrated splendidly last month, when you were President of the Security Council, will enable you to guide our work successfully and to crown it with constructive results. We shall fully support all your efforts to develop fruitful discussion on the questions submitted to the Commission for consideration.

I should also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia, for his great contribution to our Commission's work.

Despite the great complexity of the processes taking place in the world, I believe we are meeting now in conditions favourable to multilateral dialogue on disarmament problems. The cold war has come to an end. A system of peace, security and cooperation based on the Charter of the United Nations is beginning to come into effect. The disarmament process, which began in the sphere of Soviet-United States relations, is now acquiring wider dimensions.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

Today this is a political reality of the post-confrontational stage, marked by a shift from a balance of forces and reliance on arms to a balance of interests and collective security systems. It is important now, in supporting stability, to give it specific content by focusing attention on those disarmament areas in which we can expect practical results.

In the light of the lessons drawn from the Persian Gulf crisis, there is increased understanding of the fact that military force can be used only when it is sanctioned by the international community, in accordance with the Charter and with the norms of international law. In those conditions, it is particularly important to establish an extensive exchange of views concerning the role and place of military potential in the entire complex of means used to ensure national and international security. A major contribution to agreement on approaches by States to the use of military force can be made by the dialogue we are developing in the United Nations on defensive concepts and security policy. In fact, the Commission's specific agenda items, in our view, represent areas for such dialogue, which must gradually encompass all spheres of military activity.

We see it as the Commission's objective at the present stage to strengthen the definite shift in its activity towards productive, substantive discussion of issues, designed to lead to agreed recommendations which would stimulate multilateral negotiating processes on the reduction and limitation of weapons. We are convinced that there are no disarmament areas in which multilateral efforts could not yield significant results. This also applies fully to the issues relating to nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

Consistently implementing its programme of 15 January 1986 for a stage-by-stage elimination of nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union has been active conducting bilateral negotiations with the United States. Here the first substantial results have already been achieved - in particular, concerning the elimination of intermediate-range and short-range missiles in Europe. There have also been significant advances in negotiations on reducing strategic offensive weapons and definite progress towards resolving the question of limiting nuclear tests.

In advocating a stage-by-stage and balanced process of nuclear-weapons reductions, with the long-term objective of their elimination, we consider it desirable to discuss the problems of minimum nuclear deterrence. Comprehensive work on issues linked to the definition of agreed criteria and parameters for minimum nuclear deterrence may have a positive effect on progress on the most important questions of multilateral nuclear disarmament, especially with regard to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and limiting the quantity and power of nuclear tests. In our view, such a discussion could begin by working out a general understanding of the essence and basic principles of minimum deterrence as a stabilizing factor in reducing the stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Another subject for discussion could be prospects for working out, on the basis of the realization of the principle of minimum nuclear deterrence, guarantees of the non-restoration of those nuclear arsenals that have been reduced. Of course, the prospect of arriving at agreed parameters for minimum nuclear deterrence is predicated on the reduction of nuclear potentials, which must encompass all types of nuclear weapons, including non-strategic sea-based nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

We are convinced that the problem of a ban on the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes must be included as a matter of priority in the structure of negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Moreover, we consider it important to combine bilateral and multilateral efforts in this area, efforts which would complement and stimulate each other.

As part of the application of a stage-by-stage approach to the resolution of this problem, we regard it as a first, high-priority step to consider the possibilities of forming a multilateral verification machinery with regard to the production of fissionable materials and a study of the prospects of organizing monitoring and inspection for verification purposes within the framework of possible agreements in this area.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

We believe that an important area for dialogue on nuclear issues relates to the establishment of nuclear-free zones. It would be useful to develop multilateral efforts in two areas: a comprehensive overview of the entire complex of military, strategic, political and economic characteristics specific to each region and a definition of general parameters applicable to all regions within the context of the establishment of an integrated model for nuclear-free zones.

We are convinced that the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can come about only through multilateral efforts. The Soviet Union favours a comprehensive approach to non-proliferation, including not only nuclear but also chemical and bacteriological weapons and the regulation of the international arms trade. Devoting multilateral efforts to this purpose is in line with Canada's proposal to hold, under United Nations auspices and at the highest level, a global meeting on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and on restraint in the international arms traffic. We think it would be useful to begin consultations in the United Nations among all interested parties, especially the major arms exporters and the five nuclear Powers, on the entire range of issues set out in the Canadian proposal. It would be useful to discuss this idea during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly in order to agree as far as possible on the approach of Member States to finding practical ways in which to implement the Canadian initiative. It is important that substantive dialogue in the United Nations on questions concerning the non-proliferation and limitation of international supplies of weapons should promote the achievement of specific agreements on those matters.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

The item on regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security is of growing relevance today. Regional measures can be effective in lessening the risk of local conflicts and promoting progress in the general process of arms reduction and disarmament. They can effectively ensure world wide security and stability in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that the Disarmament Commission must consider all aspects of the regional approach to arms limitation and reduction and to foreign military presences.

Regional measures should be implemented with due regard for the specific characteristics of each region and with the participation of all States concerned. They should aim to achieve the lowest possible level of armaments while maintaining the principle of not compromising the security of any party to the process.

Particularly important in this respect are measures to reaffirm openness and confidence in various spheres of relations among States in the regions. The significance of confidence-building measures in the political, military and economic spheres for strengthening security and fostering the disarmament process at the regional level has already been demonstrated repeatedly in practice, most convincingly by the experience of Europe, where the greatest progress in implementing such measures has been made. Thanks largely to those measures, Europe has been able to move from confrontation to cooperation and actually to become the first continent to achieve a measure of real disarmament.

We hope that the European experience will also be found attractive by other regions, in which the level of militarization in international relations remains extremely high and dangerous. We believe that it is time to seek a

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

regional approach to ways and means to strengthen security in the region of Asia and the Pacific. That was the thrust of the proposals we put forward during Soviet President Gorbachev's recent visit to Japan. We favour the development of a broad dialogue among the States of the region, in the most varied mutually acceptable forms, on the whole range of regional-security issues, in order to find realistic ways to transform the Asian-Pacific region into a zone of openness, cooperation and prosperity.

We note with satisfaction the recent progress towards a settlement of the situation in the Persian Gulf region. We believe in the need for practical measures to limit the arms race in that region and for a consistent diminution of the balance of forces to the level of sufficiency for defence. Of great importance are steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction in the region and a balanced reduction in the supply of conventional weapons to the region, first and foremost that of offensive weapons, especially missiles and missile technology.

In our view, the United Nations too must act to stimulate regional disarmament processes. We therefore think that it would be useful if the Disarmament Commission made general recommendations on measures of regional disarmament for various regions; putting forward what might be called regional models. The adoption of such measures in regions of heightened tension would have a preventive impact as well.

We favour increased United Nations cooperation with regional organizations in order to give full support to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which relates to regional arrangements for strengthening security. Such activities could be facilitated by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which could be entrusted with the task of establishing

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

multifaceted cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to formulate regional criteria of sufficiency for defence needs and to reach the lowest possible levels of military capability.

The process of limiting the arms race and promoting disarmament at the regional level must be accompanied by verification measures. Implementing such measures could involve United Nations centres for regional disarmament. The permanent members of the Security Council should serve as guarantors of regional agreements in cases in which this would be useful. The Disarmament Commission could also recommend ways for the United Nations to participate in regional disarmament in conjunction with United Nations peace-keeping operations in various regions.

We consider it useful to discuss in the context of the regional approach the general outlines of a system of agreements on limiting the arms trade in various regions and on preventing the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons and of military missiles and missile technology.

The working paper my delegation will submit at this session will contain specific views on this agenda item.

We believe objective information on military matters to be an important factor for strengthening general security and one which is destined to become an integral part of the global confidence-building system.

Formulating and reaffirming international United Nations criteria and parameters for openness would help eliminate mutual suspicion, decrease the danger of war and increase the predictability of military activities. The basis of an international regime of openness must include universal equality of rights among States, including the right to access to information on military matters received within the context of multilateral agreements

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

and the inadmissibility of the transfer of that information to States not parties to the agreement for purposes that could be detrimental to any party.

We believe that the Commission should work out agreed recommendations to the effect that the openness regime should extend to all national, island and overseas territories of the parties and to their military bases and facilities situated in the territory of third countries not parties to the regime and that they must cover the broadest possible range of military activities, including air, naval and other forces. We therefore agree that the intensive process of transparency should include naval weapons, encompassing in particular non-strategic sea-based nuclear weapons, since omitting such important weapons from the negotiating process could impede the development of openness in other military spheres.

We favour the establishment of stable international dialogue on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament with a view to promoting an extensive exchange of scientific and technical information on a non-discriminatory basis and the strengthening of mutual trust.

At the same time, rapid scientific and technological progress brings with it, in addition to its positive effects, the real possibility of technological breakthroughs that could, if used for military purposes, seriously destabilize the international situation, undermine the confidence now taking shape among States and cause a radically new spiral in the arms race. Scientific and technological progress is creating opportunities for arms limitation and disarmament in the area of verification, the development of new technologies for the elimination of weapons of various kinds and the deployment of methods of conversion.

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

The task confronting the international community is that of making sure that scientific achievements do not produce negative consequences, of channelling them constructively and of highlighting the potential role of science and technology in supporting international security, especially in the context of the link between scientific and technical progress, disarmament, development and environmental protection. The Commission could make a substantive contribution to resolving this question in connection with the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which is planned for 1992.

In concluding my statement, Sir, allow me to dwell on one of the questions which we view as important, that of enhancing the effectiveness of the Commission's work. We believe that the Commission, in the circumstances of the reorganization of its work as provided for in General Assembly resolution 44/119 C should, as soon as possible, find its proper place in the system of multilateral disarmament bodies. We believe that such a role would be determined by the need for intensive work on specific problems of disarmament to lay the groundwork for considering them in the course of negotiations, including those at the Conference on Disarmament. It might be useful to discuss this question in the context of informal consultations, as has been done until now. For our part, we would be ready to participate in such consultations.

The questions submitted this year for the Commission's agenda are complex and multi-tiered and probably cover the most important aspects of disarmament problems. It is natural that the approaches of States to this problem and to possible ways and means to resolve them are just as varied. I believe that I express the view of us all when I say that the task of the Commission and the

(Mr. Krasulin, USSR)

fundamental objective of our discussion is precisely that of finding points of agreement, finding agreed positions on the problems under discussion and trying to give specific and practically meaningful answers to challenges in the sphere of multilateral disarmament.

Miss GUEVARA (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine delegation, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. Your expertise in disarmament, as well as your eminent reputation as a diplomat and skilled negotiator, bode well for the success of our meetings. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau. May I also express my delegation's gratitude to Mr. Nana Sutresna of Indonesia, who so ably steered the Commission's deliberations at its 1990 session.

The great Anglo-American poet T.S. Eliot wrote:

"April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain." (The Waste Land, I, "The Burial of the Dead")

By this, he referred to the sometimes difficult re-awakening of spring after winter's hibernation. Spring means the passing of an old season. However, it also implies rebirth and resurrection.

If anything marks the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission, which appropriately enough begins in April, it is the new range of possibilities that we have before us. We are fortunate to have a new agenda, having concluded in 1990 the majority of items that had occupied us in the last decade. We are also holding this meeting in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war - what has been termed the first crisis of the post-cold-war era. This

(Miss Guevara, Philippines)

crisis has underlined the weakness of our previous approaches to problems of peace and security; it also suggests to us vast possibilities in the field of disarmament, provided that we have the necessary political will and that we act with consistency.

The Persian Gulf war made us consider even more concretely than before what had been discussed in our deliberations, as well as in those of the First Committee and of the Conference on Disarmament. We were suddenly confronted by the possible use of chemical and biological weapons, by environmental warfare, by the implications of the bombing of safeguarded nuclear facilities, by scientific and technological innovations and by new arms transfers and a renewed proliferation of conventional arms. The novel vocabulary of Scud and Patriot missiles, as well as images of civilians huddled in their shelters with gas masks on, brought home to us the full reality of our debate.

As part of the preparations for this meeting, the Chairmen of the various working groups had undertaken formal, as well as informal, consultations. Indeed, their efforts have been laudable and were extremely helpful in terms of consciousness-raising and of helping us to focus on our concerns. However, it became obvious in the midst of those consultations that the old categories and approaches to disarmament no longer obtained. It is almost as if we were faced with a tabula rasa in this area.

One link of continuity, though, is the Working Group on Objective Information on Military Matters. It is obvious that one of the ways to avoid conflicts is the provision of such information. Part of the stability in the European context is due to the predictability and trust brought about by the widespread acceptance of confidence-building measures.

(Miss Guevara, Philippines)

One of our goals for the Third International Disarmament Decade could be a possible global and/or regional application of an exchange of information on military matters. The Office of the Secretary-General, for one, would be enhanced by the provision of data bases ideally centred in the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which would provide objective information on military matters. Such data would heighten its predictive abilities and allow it to anticipate certain crises before they came to a head.

The item entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of international security" signals to us the important role played by regions in solving problems which directly concern them. In the light of the Gulf crisis, certain regions have considered measures by which early-warning systems and "trip-wires" could be devised in order to forestall a conflict before it became full-blown. The stationing of even token United Nations forces in certain troubled or threatened areas would be one concept for such "trip-wires". Of special consequence to smaller or weaker countries is the question what regional balance will be struck in the wake of possible withdrawal by traditional global hegemonies in certain areas of the world.

Turning to the agenda item entitled "The process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons", we would suggest that the debate should focus on certain central concerns on which we have met recently, namely, the question of non-proliferation and the achievement of a comprehensive test ban within this decade. Preventing another arms race among the nuclear-threshold countries, in addition to reducing drastically the arsenals of the traditional nuclear Powers, should be the aim of our efforts here.

(Miss Guevara, Philippines)

We could also use this session of the Disarmament Commission to determine in mid-term whether First Committee resolutions on nuclear disarmament have been or will be complied with. Our primary concern here is to remain relevant to the disarmament process. Compliance with United Nations resolutions which reflect universal views on nuclear disarmament is something which should be taken seriously.

We should also give due consideration to such proposals as the eventual establishment of a United Nations verification agency, since verification is a decisive factor in encouraging further disarmament efforts.

Finally, in focusing on the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields, we are turning our eyes to future developments which could affect our field of discussion. Some cynics have noted in the past that each arms-control treaty has led to yet another escalation of weapons or to the qualitative development of weapons of mass destruction. Even as we meet here, for instance, plans have been drawn to build an atomic-powered rocket which could spew radioactive exhaust directly into the atmosphere. One can only imagine what a catastrophe in our atmosphere it would mean for ourselves and our planet if this occurred.

(Miss Guevara, Philippines)

I should like to propose that we keep our discussion as simple and as focused as possible. In not trying to achieve totally comprehensive documents which could serve "for all time and for all cases", we would be serving the cause of disarmament better. Let us focus on issues one at a time and try to come up with a yearly achievement that would be of help, say, to the negotiators at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Let us not fall again into the trap of being caught up in documents, with commas and brackets to be negotiated - a process which takes years to complete.

We could even choose to vary our work methods, which would allow experts, as well as non-governmental participants, to provide us with information and insights that could help move our work forward.

Certainly, we could learn from the work of other bodies in the United Nations, such as those dealing with human rights, which have directly linked up immediate problems with principles they discuss.

The new spirit of pragmatism that we have seen in the First Committee will by necessity make itself felt in the Disarmament Commission. The great challenge to us is to remain relevant in an era of rapid change and transformation.

I am confident that under your wise leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Disarmament Commission wil be able to make headway in its deliberations.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): My congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau on your election, and our gratitude to Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia for his earlier guidance of our deliberations.

New Zealand welcomes this opportunity to present views on the items to be considered at this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. I should first like to make a very few general remarks about the task before us, the background to that task.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

It is sobering to reflect that it has taken a case of senseless aggression by one State in the past year to confirm this Organization's vital role in upholding peace and security. It is sad too that, on account of suffering and repression in that State, the United Nations is once again charged to fulfil its humanitarian role. But, whatever the downside of all this, there can be no question that this Organization has played a key role in helping meet the challenges that the Gulf crisis has provided.

Clearly, hopes for an enhanced international security system have been raised by developments of the last two years. For, even before the Gulf crisis had propelled our community of nations into collective action, the new era of East-West relations had already improved the prospects for progress on the multilateral front. The Gulf war has underlined that all nations have a common interest in controlling the weapons of war.

The United Nations must now play a more active and effective role in disarmament. The sobering impact which the gulf crisis had on the deliberations at last year's General Assembly was evident to most delegations present in New York at that time. Our attention became more focused by the security threat posed by chemical weapons. We were made more acutely aware of the critical need for questions of regional disarmament to be appropriately addressed. We can take some satisfaction in the results which the session produced on those issues. This, hopefully, will now inspire more purposeful and productive discussions within the Disarmament Commission.

The Commission comes to this session better equipped to help make progress on the questions before it. The process of reform stemming from resolution 44/119 C has been successfully implemented. The conclusion of all the long-standing items at last year's session was an important achievement.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

New Zealand is pleased too that agreement has been reached on a new working agenda. The four items before us reflect a balance of interests amongst the States represented here. We have created an environment where we can be more productive. It is now up to us all to help produce the concrete results.

New Zealand places importance on the Disarmament Commission because of its essential place as a forum for deliberating upon topics of interest to the international community; but more particularly because for States like New Zealand which are not members of the Conference on Disarmament it provides the opportunity to contribute to the multilateral disarmament debate.

I should now like to turn to the item before us entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security". This is a timely issue. Last year the States of Europe and North America concluded important regional political, security and arms-control arrangements. These are helping to end the long division of Europe. They have been widely welcomed around the world. New Zealand hopes that the letter and spirit of those agreements will be adhered to.

The Gulf war has highlighted the fundamental importance of promoting security and arms control in the Middle East region. As a participant in the multinational coalition in the Gulf, New Zealand enjoins all States involved in the discussions on future arrangements in that region to consider and to seize the opportunities now available for arms-control measures, as well as for resolving those other key international issues which need to be addressed to bring about a new era of Middle East peace and security.

Regional security is likewise a matter of interest to States within the Asia-Pacific region, of which New Zealand itself is part. It is of course widely recognized that any measures should always be appropriate to a region's

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

unique circumstances, and that they should enhance security. New Zealand particularly welcomes the renewed interest of our region in resolving bilateral disputes and improving dialogue as a way to making progress towards greater regional cooperation.

The United Nations plays a key role in facilitating regional discussions through its three regional disarmament centres. New Zealand is grateful to the Department for Disarmament Affairs for hosting two recent meetings in the Asia-Pacific region. The first continued the useful work of the regional disarmament centre in Kathmandu. The second - for which we also thank the Indonesian Government - was held at Bandung as part of the Disarmament Fellowship Programme.

But this Commission cannot, when all is said and done, prescribe solutions for improving security in individual regions. That is a matter for States directly concerned, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region. But while the answers that are given to questions of regional disarmament may not be the same in the different regions of the world, all States have an equal responsibility to consider the regional as well as the global dimension of security and disarmament measures. Having been so recently reminded of the value of universal collective security, it would be unfortunate if we were now to encourage States to consider security in its purely regional dimension. New Zealand believes that global and regional security are inseparably connected. This vital interrelationship is indeed acknowledged in the very title of the item before us.

New Zealand was pleased to cosponsor the draft resolution that became resolutions 45/58 M and 45/58 P, on regional disarmament, during last year's General Assembly session. We now welcome the opportunity to share views on

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

the relationship between dispute resolution, dialogue, confidence-building and arms control. We think it may also be useful to review arrangements for cooperation and arms control already adopted in various regions. New Zealand would be pleased to share its own experience in its own region on these matters. Our hope is that as a result of discussions in this forum it will be possible to widen and deepen the consensus on this topic in future.

In the field of nuclear disarmament the Commission is, hopefully, turning a new corner. In the past, nuclear arms appeared not only the greatest potential threat to global security, but also the most intractable part of the disarmament agenda. However, recent developments have been encouraging. The intermediate-range nuclear forces Treaty abolished a whole category of nuclear weapons. Since then there has been significant progress towards a reduction in strategic weapons. There is also an intention to deal with short-range nuclear weapons in Europe. New Zealand warmly welcomes all these steps. We trust they will provide a foundation for further agreements.

As we look to the future, it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves how this progress was achieved. I do not intend to belittle the real efforts of the negotiators, who laboured tirelessly to produce these results, but it has not been simply a matter of seeking suitable words or formulas. Nor, despite the important advances that have been made in verification, has it just been a question of applying new technology.

To a large extent, nuclear disarmament has been made possible by political developments that go beyond any particular set of negotiations. These arms-control agreements were the outcome, as much as the cause, of a new degree of confidence and trust in relations between East and West. The ending of the cold war remains therefore a period of profound challenge and unparalleled opportunity for all.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

It is clear from recent events that there is a renewed commitment on the part of most Member States to the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. By helping in conflict resolution, the United Nations can contribute significantly to eliminating sources of international tension. This should have an important bearing on the acquisition and development of all weapons capabilities, including nuclear weapons, by nation States. It should help create the climate to promote disarmament. New Zealand believes that countries can also encourage the nuclear disarmament process by intensifying efforts against horizontal proliferation. Increased participation in vital multilateral arms-control agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a welcome development, and we believe that universality of membership of such agreements must be a goal for the new world order now emerging.

The strength of feeling that exists within the international community on the issue of nuclear disarmament is evident in the raft of resolutions adopted on this issue at each session of the General Assembly, but while action may be called for on various nuclear disarmament issues, we must also recognize that no consensus yet exists on many of these. Accordingly, in order for the Disarmament Commission to make a practical and effective contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament, we need to build on the positive developments and to avoid becoming sidetracked into disputed areas where agreement, in the form of either conclusions or recommendations, may not be realistically expected. We need at this stage to concentrate our consideration on areas where a consensus may be developed.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

I would like to note the valuable contribution which has been made by the comprehensive study on nuclear weapons, presented to the General Assembly at its last session. In our view, this document helps to identify some of the issues which could appropriately be considered by our Commission.

As shown in our sponsorship of resolution 44/116 E, New Zealand supports moves to encourage States to make available objective information on military matters. It is, after all, simply unrealistic to expect nation States to exercise greater political restraint over their own armaments if they do not have tangible evidence of the capabilities and intentions of others. New Zealand contributes to this process through its responses to the Secretary-General's standardized questionnaire on military expenditures, and we also publish defence policy papers. New Zealand hopes that continued consideration by this Commission of this item will help identify further ways in which the goal of objective information might be pursued, and will encourage all members to take appropriate steps at the national level.

Before concluding, I would like to refer to the specific subject of transparency in arms transfers: clearly, it is an area that is ripe for action. Events in the Gulf have reinforced the fact that transfers of military equipment can have a major bearing on security and can have destabilizing results. There have already been some important proposals for making transfers more open to scrutiny. New Zealand supports this goal, and calls for buyers and sellers of arms to show greater restraint. We hope that all aspects of the arms transfer question will receive wide consideration, particularly in the light of the forthcoming report of the United Nations expert study group on this subject. Next year's session should, we believe, take up the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the study group in detail.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

An important start in examining the fourth substantive item of our agenda, "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields", was made at the United Nations conference held at Sendai in April 1990. New Zealand appreciated the opportunity to participate in this conference; it produced a number of conclusions relevant to our discussions. Its report should greatly facilitate the work of the Commission.

The New Zealand delegation looks forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and with other delegations over the coming three weeks. With the right mix of commitment and energy, this session of the Disarmament Commission can be a useful and productive one.

Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia): First of all, I would like to express to you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, our very best wishes and congratulations on your election to the office of Chairman of the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission. Your dynamic personal approach to the issues facing us, combined with your refined diplomatic skills and rich professional experience, is a reliable guarantee of your effective leadership of this session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's active assistance in the accomplishment of your lofty assignment, and of its readiness to contribute constructively to the successful work of the Commission.

Our positive assessment of the present international situation emanates from the fact that new conditions and possibilities for the maintenance of international security have emerged in the world. The risk of global conflicts is diminishing, and the prerequisites for closer cooperation in all

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

spheres are increasingly present; the purpose and character of military and political blocs are changing; and the prospects for a gradual substitution of such blocs by a new security system are taking shape.

Expectations as to what can be achieved in negotiations have consequently become more realistic. While general and complete disarmament has remained the avowed ultimate goal, much more modest steps have come to be actually discussed. The propaganda cloud around them is slowly yet steadily dispersing.

At the same time, the foreign policy priorities of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, as a Central European State, are directed towards Europe, both in respect of the creation of a security system and of our integration endeavours. Nevertheless, the primary attention paid by Czechoslovakia to European affairs is not meant to imply a lack of appreciation of global problems. Therefore, we resolutely advocate the adoption of specific measures aimed at curbing armaments, and at disarmament on a world-wide scale, with particular reference to hotbeds of heightened tension. The role of the Disarmament Commission in this regard is irreplaceable.

Allow me to take advantage of this discussion to raise a question which might be a follow-up to the statement by the representative of Austria concerning the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. At the end of last week, a draft report by the Secretary-General concerning the implementation of part C of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991 was placed before the Security Council. This part of the resolution contains requirements for all Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, including all stocks of such agents and all related research, development, support and manufacturing facilities, to be destroyed, removed or rendered harmless. This process is to take place under

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

the supervision of a Special Commission of the United Nations, to be established under paragraph 9 (b) (i) of the resolution.

For tens, and maybe hundreds, of arms-control experts, specific activities will start in respect of on-site inspection of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile capabilities and their destruction. A number of countries have already informed the Secretariat that they will make available to the Special Commission experts - specialists in chemical and biological weapons, in chemical industry production and technological facilities, and in the on-site analysis of chemical weapons - and equipment.

For the purposes of the Special Commission and of the activities of the experts, those countries are also designating inspectors specializing in all kinds of verification activities to do with the destruction of chemical and bacteriological weapons, including the collection and analysis of samples.

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

Some of those States are also ready - in case of need - to carry out a more detailed specialized analysis of the collected samples of chemical or biological agents, to provide laboratories to this end, and to notify the Secretary-General of their results, as required by General Assembly resolution 44/115 B.

I speak at such length on this subject because, along with other interested countries, Czechoslovakia is ready to provide experts and equipment immediately or as soon as requested to do so by the United Nations. The aforementioned activity falls fully within the framework of our efforts at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, where our delegation regards it as a primary task to break the vicious circle surrounding the completion and adoption of the convention on the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons.

Against the background of the blasts of the "ecological bombs" in the Persian Gulf, mankind has realized with a new urgency during the past weeks the danger of the use of chemical and biological weapons. As the best remedy against such fear, the Conference might, for example, initiate a common declaration of its member States and observers of a commitment to refrain from being the first to use chemical weapons during the period of negotiation on the chemical-weapons convention. It appears to be highly necessary to improve substantially the verification régime on biological weapons.

However, the effect of the Persian Gulf crisis on arms control is not unequivocal. On the one hand, it is becoming evident how short-sighted it is politically to sell arms to anyone on the basis of purely commercial interests. More than one dictator has been armed already in that way. I should like to recall in this connection that the new Czechoslovak leadership did away with such practices and has discontinued arms exports to hotbeds of

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tension. In future, we will pursue a policy of maximum restraint. On the other hand, we are concerned about possible attempts in the military and political circles of certain regional and subregional Powers to take advantage of the situation to hamper programmes for cutting military budgets.

The limitation of armaments is now particularly relevant in Europe. The European continent has had, in the post-war era, the dubious distinction of having the highest concentration of arms in the world. The source of continued tension in the area has lain in a longstanding asymmetry in the conventional armaments of the two blocs. We agree with the view that positive experience in one region can set an example, if not necessarily a pattern, for other regions. But this only encourages me to share briefly some considerations regarding the prospects for the all-European process.

More than three weeks ago, the military structure of the Warsaw Treaty Organization ceased to exist. A corresponding decision was made by the Treaty Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence at their last meeting. It is more than a symbol of the present Europe that this agreement was signed with Pelikan fountain pens made in Germany. At least in that way the German Democratic Republic - the former seventh member of the bloc - participated in the act. Along with the joint military forces, six standing military command bodies, a joint system of air defence, six fundamental and several supplementary agreements have been abolished. A logical step that should follow is the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty as such.

We in Czechoslovakia, who have lived the last 40 years on the dividing line between the two blocs, have been ardently seeking new possibilities for safeguarding the security of the whole continent. In pursuing that goal we do not feel that all is in vain, nor do we fear that we may again end up with a disaster similar to that which befell the League of Nations. That would be

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seeing the future as having no prospects, no solutions. We believe that solutions do exist. Together with other Helsinki process participants, we are seeking new, untrodden paths.

An important step in the direction of building a more stable and safer Europe was the negotiating and signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) Paris summit. This Treaty, if faithfully implemented, can ensure the elimination of the disproportion and imbalance of forces on the continent and establish prerequisites for a further balanced reduction of equipment and personnel.

The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic fully subscribes to this Treaty and has taken a number of domestic political steps which are in harmony with that document's spirit. We have adopted a new, truly defensive military doctrine and in the very near future the strength of our armed forces will be reduced and their combat equipment limited.

In our opinion, the best way of reliably safeguarding stability and development in the Europe of tomorrow is through a harmonious interaction between the key institutions of the European security architecture - the CSCE, the North Atlantic Alliance, the European Communities, the Western European Union and the Council of Europe - in full respect for their individual missions. The nature of security on the European continent is manifold, and manifold also are the sources of its possible endangerment, which necessitate that various forms of interaction between European institutions be sought. The common denominator of such cooperation must be respect for the legitimate security interests of all European countries, the United States of America and Canada. In search of an expression of European security, the CSCE process is

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the only one that offers both an all-European platform and a transatlantic link of solidarity. The necessary impulses should be generated therefrom.

In Paris last November, the highest representatives of the CSCE countries founded the first institutions of the Helsinki process. This step has become the beginning of the road leading to the establishment of new cooperative security structures on the continent. But development has to go on. A primary role should be played by the new all-European disarmament forum. Functions of the Conflict Prevention Centre should be considerably extended beyond the framework of military measures and the CSCE procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes should be strengthened. An all-European verification system for compliance with the disarmament agreements is missing. It will be necessary to take indispensable measures in the field of registration and, later, control of the sale and transfer of conventional arms and equipment.

All these and other confidence-building measures among States cannot be realized except in close interaction with the existing security institutions. It was underlined in a memorandum of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on European security, which was transmitted on 9 April 1991 to representatives of the CSCE countries.

We have welcomed the inclusion of the question of nuclear disarmament on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. The positive trends in the world and the dynamic formulation of this item imbue us with a hope that the three years to come will be more productive in this direction than were the past twelve years. We regard a gradual abandoning of the policy of deterrence as one of the main prerequisites for the achievement of a concrete outcome. We see that pr s as a logical reaction to the further improvement of the

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international situation, to enhanced confidence among States and to the building of new security structures.

We are convinced that trust and confidence in relations among States, as well as stability, are facilitated by an atmosphere of openness rather than by secrecy, whether in reference to serious facts or to the tiniest insubstantial details. From the global point of view, the provision of objective information about the military sphere is of essential importance for the maintenance of world peace, the strengthening of security, and cooperation. It creates prerequisites for genuine progress at disarmament negotiations aimed at the conclusion of concrete treaties. This is why we have supported from the very outset, inter alia, the United States initiative to generate a system of verification called "open skies". This régime would render transparent military activities covering the entire area from San Francisco to Vladivostok.

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We welcome the inclusion of the item entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields," given its timeliness. We agree with a number of other countries on the inadmissibility of the increasing production of ever-more sophisticated weapons, which markedly exceeds the productivity of negotiating forums dealing with disarmament. On the other hand, we realize the need for preserving a reasonable level of a high-quality research-and-development base to serve defence purposes.

New technologies are setting a fast pace for change in our world. Through science and technology we are able to make our world better, richer and more liveable for everyone. However - and this is one of the main challenges of our age - some technologies have brought new means of destruction into our lives and have confronted the world with the real prospect of self-destruction.

Even under a strict arms control régime we can expect the competition to continue as each side seeks to develop ways to counter what it views as the other side's advantages. If conventional-force reductions are properly managed the resulting balance can probably be made fairly impervious to technological advances. The task may be much more difficult when it comes to attempting reductions of nuclear weapons to very low levels. Here, the prospects for disrupting a stable balance through technological advances are more substantial. Stability will be helped by agreements that control the use of technology. Discovery is hard to control. Emphasis on advances that forestall surprise and attack momentum can aid stability.

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A cursory examination of this session's agenda may induce us to think that we face an easier task now than we did last year. Actually, we share the view that the four substantive items on the agenda give us a chance to consider these crucial spheres of arms control and disarmament very comprehensively while bearing in mind concrete conclusions and results - a chance that we must not let slip. The intensive consultations held by the Chairmen of the individual Working Groups prior to the session have indicated that, given the constructive efforts of the participating delegations, we can expect such a positive outcome.

Mr. CHADHA (India): The Indian delegation would like to extend its warm felicitations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We are confident that your proven skills and experience will guide us to a fruitful conclusion of our work at this session of the Commission, which is embarking on its deliberations under an improved and restructured format. I should also like to congratulate the other officers of the Commission on their elections. Let me also take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia, who so ably and successfully steered the Commission's session last year.

The Disarmament Commission derived its mandate from the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as a deliberate forum with universal membership. Since its inception it has adopted, inter alia, the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade, which was approved by consensus and followed by a mid-decade review, also adopted by consensus. The priorities and goals for urgent action in the field of disarmament, as recommended therein, have remained unfulfilled, a fact that was acknowledged last year by the Disarmament Commission when it

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adopted the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade. Measures in the field of nuclear disarmament figure at the top of the list of priorities.

The processes under way have achieved far less than expected, even outside the Disarmament Commission. The optimism and expectations witnessed after the signing of the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - have been sustained, against all odds, for four years now, while the much-awaited treaty to emerge from the strategic arms reduction talks (START) is yet to materialize. The START agenda will be 10 years old this coming November. Meanwhile, much has happened on both the international political scene and in the field of nuclear armaments during the past decade. It would not be unrealistic, therefore, to hope for not only the speediest conclusion of the START treaty but also for the immediate launching of the second phase of nuclear-arms reduction, which would take the world much further than the 30 per cent cuts confined to the strategic nuclear arsenals of only two nuclear-weapon States. At the same time, it is pressingly imperative to close the avenues for the qualitative upgrading of nuclear weapons and the recycling of retired nuclear warheads.

The physical dimension of the nuclear menace remains undiminished today. What has changed is the political scenario of the cold war and the frightening tensions that it bred. Despite the unprecedented promise of these great political changes, there is no reason to be complacent about or ignore existing nuclear-weapons stockpiles. There cannot be any justification for conferring legitimacy or sanctity on the theory of nuclear deterrence. There

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is every need to build further on the earlier signals indicating a move away from an inflexible military posture based on the first use of nuclear weapons. The continuing danger of the annihilation of human civilization should nuclear weapons be used gives rise to an urgent need to exercise political will and to search for acceptable solutions to nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a fixed time frame. It is essential to embrace an alternative to the ongoing reliance on nuclear weapons, with its detailed consequences.

It was with that alternative in mind that India proposed an action plan for a world free of nuclear weapons at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The central focus of that action plan is the elimination of all nuclear weapons in three stages over a period of 22 years. The action plan recognizes the need for flexibility in the enactment of some of the measures proposed. Among the nuclear-disarmament measures envisaged in the plan are a ban on the production of nuclear weapons and weapons-grade fissionable material, a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons, setting the stage for a comprehensive test-ban treaty and negotiations on an international convention outlawing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We have also proposed that nuclear disarmament be accompanied by such collateral measures as the establishment of a single multilateral verification system by the end of the century, the banning of chemical and radiological weapons, a moratorium on the development, testing and deployment of weapons in space and the development of a system that fosters technological progress but interdicts its application to military purposes.

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Serious consideration needs to be given to the attitudes, policies, doctrines, institutions and instruments required for a nuclear-weapon-free world. The self-interest of the critical and catalytic group comprising the scientific-bureaucratic, military-industrial complex has managed to subdue the universal concern expressed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament that, in addition to the quantitative aspect, the qualitative aspect of the arms race must also receive attention.

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Today a number of technologies that have the potential of completely transforming the methods of fighting war and the nature of warfare are in an advanced stage of development. The maturity and application of these technologies would have far-reaching implications for international security and would be a major setback to disarmament efforts.

At the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, India presented a working paper on new technologies and the qualitative arms race, and since then we have been submitting at the General Assembly, along with other like-minded delegations, a resolution entitled "Scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security", in order to draw the attention of the world community to this important aspect of disarmament.

Expenditure on military research and development today accounts for 25 per cent of the total expenditure on research and development, and the pace of technological change in the military sector is unprecedented. New scientific and technological developments, making use of miniaturization and large-scale computing capabilities, are taking place in the fields of third-generation nuclear weapons, ballistic missile defence, directed energy weapons, materials technology, artificial intelligence, conventional weapons, chemical and biological weapons, biotechnology and superconductivity, to name but a few.

With these developments, complex technical problems in future will make verification even more elusive. Given the fact that there are no barriers to human knowledge, what is achieved by a handful of States today can be adopted by many more in the future. It will be prudent, therefore, to agree collectively on the non-pursuit of certain paths that could have a further

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destabilizing impact on the global security situation in the future, rendering existing arms limitations meaningless. A number of these developments, such as sensor development, communications and computing capabilities, can have implications that prove to be immensely beneficial for the verification of disarmament agreements and for the protection of the environment. Scientific and technological developments must be channelled decisively in favour of peaceful uses. My delegation intends to present a working paper under agenda item 7 at this session, outlining our views and detailed suggestions in concrete terms.

At this session we will also begin our consideration of the topic of a regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security. The agreed international agenda, with its priorities, primarily concerns the global approach to disarmament. The aim of regional disarmament is to contribute to the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament by means of partial, geographically limited measures. This goal must be borne in mind in seeking to identify specific guidelines intrinsic to the regional approach to disarmament.

It is important, therefore, to define the role of the regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security. The regional approach to disarmament must be based on the underlying security concerns in the region in question, where it can contribute to their alleviation. The definition of a region will, in turn, have to encompass the full range of the security concerns of the countries involved and the practicality of a specific measure of disarmament suggested in this context.

A regional approach to security cannot be viable in a confrontational environment. Therefore, appropriate confidence-building measures, guidelines

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for which were elaborated by the Commission in 1988, although not disarmament measures themselves, have the potential of contributing significantly to the enhancement of peace and security and the attainment of disarmament measures when applied in a comprehensive manner and taking into account the specific characteristics of the region and the consensus of participating States in the process as an essential prerequisite.

The security concerns of each of the constituent nations relevant to a particular disarmament approach should be fully taken into account. As States perceive their security indivisibly, regional solutions to common security cannot be compartmentalized. The experience of one region can serve as a guideline, but cannot necessarily be followed in another region.

The arms race, particularly in its nuclear aspect, runs counter to regional or global disarmament efforts. An increasing number of countries are sucked into the vortex of the arms build-up, spiralled by the increasing military expenditure of the big military Powers. Developing countries are doubly affected - first, by increasing global expenditure and tightened money supply, and, secondly, by their increasing expenditure on defence for security needs. It is therefore essential that steps which curb this trend at the global level are initiated in order that the regional approach to disarmament is successful. Although in most cases the development of new weapons is justified on the grounds of reducing the risk of war, the reverse is actually true. Besides halting such development, it is also necessary to ensure that arms rendered surplus as a result of disarmament measures in one region are not diverted to other regions.

Discussions will continue at this session on the topic of objective information on military matters. It will be essential to clarify at this

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session what role this topic has in disarmament and international peace and security. Paragraph 105 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament states that Member States should be encouraged to ensure a better flow of information with regard to the various aspects of disarmament to avoid dissemination of false and tendentious information concerning armaments, and to concentrate on the danger of escalation of the armaments race and on the need for general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Progress in disarmament is possible primarily through the exercise of the political will of States, especially those possessing nuclear weapons, as mentioned in paragraph 10 of that Final Document. In recent years we have seen examples of this political will translating itself into disarmament agreements. Therefore, lack of progress cannot be attributed to lack of information on military matters.

On the other hand, a better flow of information on military matters could, though it would not necessarily do so, serve as a confidence-building measure and a catalyst for disarmament agreements, with verification provisions based on objective assessments. If data or information on military matters are to be used in any meaningful manner, they should be comprehensive, be available to all States on an equal footing and be based on specific requirements in a specific context. At best, however, such an exchange of information can have only an auxiliary role in initiating, carrying on or sustaining specific disarmament agreements. It is for this reason that the usefulness of strictly adhering to the standardized reporting system worked out in the early 1980s is questionable. The standardized reporting system should include figures of per capita military expenditure and military

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expenditure as a percentage of gross national product. The items of expenditure to be reflected should include expenditure on weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

My delegation will be ready to elaborate our views further on the various topics on our agenda and to cooperate with other delegations in an effort to reach common ground.

Mr. ALMUAKKAF (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (interpretation from Arabic): It is my pleasure to be speaking on behalf of the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union: Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Let me begin by extending to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at the present session. Your in-depth knowledge of the subject and your wide experience will play an important role as you guide the Commission's deliberations. On behalf of the countries of the Maghreb, I assure you of our support and full cooperation. We also congratulate the other Commission officers on their election, and thank Ambassador Sutresna of Indonesia, who guided the work of the Commission at its last session in such an outstanding way.

The items on the agenda of the Commission at its current session are of particular importance as they deal with several questions discussed at length in previous sessions of the General Assembly. Opinions may differ concerning the treatment of those items, but this in no way lessens their importance. They have made themselves felt during this final decade of the twentieth century; we must make ready to enter the next century having laid the foundations for security and cooperation among all nations.

On numerous occasions the Maghreb countries have reaffirmed at the highest level their complete dedication to the principle of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament since nuclear weapons continue to pose the greatest threat to mankind. In cooperation with all other countries, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union will work to devise a formula susceptible of consensus and to formulate a document to include all items considered by the Commission, benefiting from the positive developments in relations between

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the two super-Powers. We shall also work towards wording that could lead to a complete ban on nuclear-weapons research, which could finally permit the complete elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

The Maghreb countries have supported the transformation of the partial nuclear-test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty; in doing so they wish to participate effectively and seriously in nuclear-weapons limitation and non-proliferation, in a halt to the development of such weapons, and in the achievement of the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We regret that certain nuclear States continue to erect obstacles and to prevent the signing of such a treaty. That position probably reflects a desire for the selective implementation of treaties and resolutions adopted by the United Nations over the years.

Slowing down the development of nuclear weapons by a halt to testing could encourage certain parties not to respect agreements and resolutions and could impede the comprehensive nuclear disarmament to which the international community as a whole aspires.

Based on their firm faith and continued action to create a world free from nuclear weapons, the countries of the Maghreb believe that conventional, chemical and biological weapons and weapons of mass destruction pose a serious threat, especially since research into the development of such weapons continues in certain regions. Countries that produce and export such weapons must bear the full responsibility with respect to their limitation and non-proliferation - in the same way as we are trying to limit nuclear weapons. Therefore, the Maghreb countries have adhered to all arms-limitation resolutions, and will work to reach this goal with no discrimination with respect to qualitative or regional factors.

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It should be stressed that scientific research to peaceful ends and for development purposes must be encouraged for the well-being and the future of mankind through technology transfers and by encouraging countries to receive such transfers. We must therefore focus our efforts on development questions.

The Maghreb countries add their voice to those calling for the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world with a view to the creation of a world entirely free of nuclear weapons. To consolidate peace and security based on that principle, the Maghreb countries have supported the declaration of Africa as a nuclear-free zone and the declaration of the Middle East as a region free of weapons of mass destruction. The same holds true for all other regions. But, in the view of the Maghreb countries, bringing about those two zones will be difficult if the principles are not applied to all countries of the regions by making them adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Mediterranean basin holds an important strategic position compared with other regions. It is therefore imperative that the region be preserved as a zone of security, cooperation and peace through bilateral and multilateral agreements among the littoral States, all of which are striving to make the Mediterranean into a region of peace and security. The Maghreb countries welcome international and regional efforts to consolidate security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, and maintain priority relations with countries of the central Mediterranean and countries on its northern and western coasts, since the security of the Mediterranean basin is closely linked with the security of Europe.

We welcome the agreement on the limitation of conventional weapons and forces in Europe, and support the conclusions of the relevant conferences and

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all United Nations resolutions on peace and security in the Mediterranean region. This reaffirms the important role the United Nations must play in building a solid and effective basis for peace and security in the region and in making the Mediterranean into a region of peace and security.

It is painful to see States, particularly developing States, devoting human and natural resources to the establishment of arsenals where they accumulate weapons to the detriment of their human needs and the demands of development, thus leaving their peoples prey to ignorance, illness and poverty. If the world can bring about disarmament, it will surely be capable of ensuring the proper atmosphere for development. In that connection, the Maghreb countries support all efforts aimed at guaranteeing complete security to all nations, at the lowest possible level of weapons and military expenditure. But each people has the right to determine its own legitimate needs. Countries that produce and export weapons cannot arrogate that right to themselves with respect to importers and non-producers of weapons.

While certain countries produce, possess and purchase weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction, with the assistance of nuclear countries, other countries of the same region are not permitted similar weapons for their own defence. The Maghreb countries reaffirm that peace and security throughout the world can be established only through a global policy applied to all countries without discrimination or selectivity.

In conclusion, the delegations of the Maghreb countries reaffirm the importance of the role of the United Nations in preserving international peace and security and its tireless efforts for disarmament. We urge all countries to contribute effectively to the success of our Organization's work in shouldering its responsibility in the field of disarmament.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation, Sir, offers its warm congratulations upon your unanimous election to preside over the affairs of the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission. The active role and strong commitment of your country, Austria, in the spheres of regional disarmament in Europe and multilateral disarmament efforts are very well known. Together with your personal credentials and accomplishments as a seasoned diplomat, we are quite confident that you will provide the requisite guidance to steer our work here towards a successful conclusion. The same congratulations go to the other members of the Bureau.

This year is the first time, after the inaugural session of the reconstituted Commission in 1979, that we will be discussing three entirely new substantive agenda items at the same session. Together with the single agenda item dealing with objective information on military matters from the 1990 session, this year's session acquires a unique importance in the 13-year history of the Commission. Underlying the significance are the reform programmes carried out in 1989 under General Assembly resolution 44/119 C, concerning the ways and means of enhancing the functioning of the Commission. Judging from the unprecedented and remarkable achievement recorded in the 1990 session, my delegation believes that it is within our power to continue to make the Commission increasingly relevant to the global aspirations of the 1990s and beyond.

Since we stated our views last year on objective information on military matters, which we consider a secondary disarmament priority, our text will focus essentially on the three new items before us, namely, process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons; regional approach to

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disarmament within the context of global security; and the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields. The Nigerian delegation firmly believes that the elimination of nuclear weapons from the arsenals of all nations is indispensable for securing lasting international peace and security. The history of the past 46 years, since the atomic bomb was first used in warfare, vividly demonstrates that even among the nations that possess them, nuclear weapons have not offered permanent security. As the most lethal weapons of terror and mass destruction ever invented, their total elimination rightly deserves the priority attention of the international community.

In spite of their awesome capacity for mass annihilation, progress in the sphere of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons has been painfully slow. Notwithstanding some multilateral, regional or bilateral agreements reached so far, including the 1987 Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), the hard fact is that the totality of over 50,000 global nuclear arsenals represent the most sophisticated, accurate and destructive weapons of any time in history.

Whatever the rationale behind the arms race, the formal pronouncement of the burial of the cold war era now makes the de-escalation of the arms race and the dismantling of its most threatening phenomenon, namely, the nuclear arms race, a desideratum. With the fall of the Berlin wall, the reunification of Germany, the reintegration process of Europe and the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact military wing behind us, the political rivalries and ideological competition underpinning the cold war era have now lost their momentum. With both the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as their former rival bloc allies no longer considered as mutual adversaries, the 1990s should truly

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open the way for unprecedented progress in various disarmament fields, particularly nuclear disarmament.

The process of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons will not be simple, but at the same time, they are achievable within a relatively short period. Nigeria believes that nuclear weapons could be eliminated in 10 to 15 years. The key aspect is the political will to do so. Central to the process of nuclear disarmament would be the comprehensive prohibition of all nuclear tests, as well as the freezing of all qualitative improvements and quantitative stockpiles of existing arsenals. The prohibition of the use of fissionable material for weapons purposes would also be crucial at this stage. The current spate of relentless research and development into new generations of more destructive weapons should be halted.

A meaningful process of elimination of nuclear weapons would also entail a comprehensive approach to the question of proliferation, whether vertically or horizontally, or of their geographical deployment, with a view to disentangling the web. Part of this web would involve according priority attention to the key issue of the vertical proliferation and qualitative refinement of existing arsenals without losing sight of certain proliferation tendencies that are particularly destabilizing or threatening in regional contexts. Our experience in Africa shows that South Africa's nuclear weapons capability has been the greatest single impediment to the realization of a nuclear-free Africa since the 1964 declaration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) proclaiming Africa as a nuclear-free zone. The introduction of nuclear weapons into Africa by South Africa, without appropriate collective responses by the permanent members of the Security Council, reflects the selective approach to the question of nuclear proliferation. Thus, the

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process of the elimination of nuclear weapons will have to be shifted radically from the major Powers' present discriminatory attitude of acquiescence to nuclear acquisition by their friends, while at the same time they vehemently condemn other proliferators whose political complexions they do not like. Nevertheless, primary attention should focus on the two major Powers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union, which possess the vast majority of nuclear inventories. Likewise, the United Kingdom, France and China should de-escalate and ultimately eliminate their nuclear armaments. As the five declared nuclear Powers with over 95 per cent of global nuclear arsenals, they obviously bear primary responsibility for effective nuclear disarmament.

As in any disarmament field, the role of the United Nations in the process of nuclear disarmament is decisive. In its unique position of embracing all the States that possess all the known nuclear arsenals today, and taking cognizance of the vast machinery at its disposal, the United Nations is best equipped not only as the most important forum for achieving nuclear disarmament through global consensus but also for providing necessary mechanisms for its early realization. Of course, there exist some regional mechanisms that could complement the United Nations in this regard.

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The item entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security" deserves very careful consideration because of the impact of regional peace and security on the international plane. The history of the two world wars shows that they started as regional conflicts before embroiling the whole world, with devastating consequences. While we have been spared such global wars since 1945, the nearly 160 local conflicts that have occurred, mostly in the developing countries, have nevertheless sometimes involved external major Powers and created huge socio-economic repercussions in the affected regions and even beyond. Thus, in our interdependent world the whole cannot be said to be well when some parts are severely afflicted by war. The recent war in the Persian Gulf highlights the deleterious effects of regional instability on international peace and security.

In essence, global security must be approached anew and comprehensively. The regional dimension should take into consideration the peculiarities of each region and the various political, socio-economic and cultural divergencies which foster harmony or accentuate insecurity, as the case may be. In such a setting, there should be an examination of how security could be promoted or sustained under very diverse situations. There is also the need to examine security in both military and non-military terms, with a view to identifying areas of threat to both. Just as excessive armaments can threaten peace, security and stability in any region, so also can terrible poverty, environmental degradation, ecological disasters or denial of fundamental human rights. Thus, while we strive to reinforce the mechanisms for peaceful coexistence, crisis prevention and conflict resolution and management, the conscious promotion of the political, social and economic cooperation and well-being of peoples in any region would contribute to

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ensuring lasting international peace and security. Again, the central role of the United Nations in attaining these ends cannot be overemphasized.

Coming from the African continent, which has witnessed some of the worst armed conflicts, I must note that peace and security in Africa are inseparably linked to development and inter-State cooperation. The desire for an environment devoid of armed competition and instability informed the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, as the pan-African continental body devoted to the promotion of peace, security, freedom, development and cooperation among the African countries. The OAU also established necessary mechanisms for conflict resolution, crisis prevention and management through instruments of arbitration and conciliation and other peaceful processes. The 1964 OAU Declaration on the denuclearization of Africa and other subregional initiatives underline Africa's firm support for non-armament, non-aggression and regional cooperation. The establishment in 1986 by the United Nations of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, embracing 22 African and Latin American States on both sides of the South Atlantic, further reinforces Africa's commitment to the objectives of regional peace, security and cooperation as an integral part of achieving disarmament and international security.

The third new item, "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields", encapsulates an important question which is central to disarmament, since science and technology either could serve the goals of disarmament and promote global peace and security or, conversely, could impede their realization. By their own dynamics, science and technology have propelled and modernized the arms

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race from atomic bombs to nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, from rockets to intercontinental ballistic missiles, from fighter aircraft to supersonic bombers, and from surface warships to nuclear-capable attack submarines. The research in and the development, testing, production and deployment of various categories of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arsenals have been made possible through innovations in science and technology. Developments in science and technology, for example, have led to the possibility of environmental modification techniques, particularly of the weather and climate, being made conducive for hostile or military purposes, with possible severe effects on the level of destruction, damage or injury to a State. There are hosts of other negative impacts of science and technology on the ways of disarmament.

At the same time, science and technology are indispensable to verification of and compliance with many disarmament agreements or treaties, and their role will be even more crucial in the years ahead. In the field of conversion of military industries to civilian production, the destruction of arsenals brought about by disarmament agreements, and general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the role of science and technology is unassailable. Above all, in various spheres of socio-economic development and sustainable environment crucial to non-military threats to security, science and technology play a central role.

The task before the Disarmament Commission is therefore to identify and isolate the aspects of science and technology that promote disarmament, development and global security and the aspects that do not, including those with dual-purpose applications. In short, science and technology can be made to serve the goals of global peace, depending on how they are used.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

The Nigerian delegation sees our efforts in these three new areas at this session as basically exploratory. We should thus focus on a general analysis of the various issues involved, and make a preliminary evaluation of the various strands of view expressed by delegations. In this connection, we are of the view that we should utilize some pertinent materials or ideas emanating from those previous meetings on disarmament in other forums that could serve the purposes of any of the new items. For instance, some aspects of the 1978 Final Document of the first special session on disarmament, in spite of what some might say to the contrary, bear particular relevance today to some of our new agenda items, and to the approach that could be taken in coming to terms with our mandate. As we have three years to finish each of the three new items, we could follow up next year by engaging in more exhausting consideration of these ideas, with a view to establishing specific guidelines, while in 1993 we could concretize them with a view to finalizing text agreements through consensus.

In the course of the proceedings of the various Working Groups, my delegation will put forward more detailed proposals on these aspects, as appropriate.

Mr. PEERTHUM (Mauritius): I should like first of all to associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, as well as the members of your Bureau. I should like also to extend my appreciation to Ambassador Sutresna for the excellent work accomplished during the last session.

(Mr. Peerthum, Mauritius)

With your experience, Mr. Chairman, and your outstanding diplomatic skills, you will guide the Commission on the new path it has chosen and ensure that our deliberations strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

(Mr. Peerthum, Mauritius)

The agenda we shall be debating in the coming days and weeks deals with important and complex issues. Recent international events have shown that they are interrelated. Peace remains fragile and difficult to maintain. The international community evolves in an environment fraught with changing obstacles. New demands for peace and security need to be addressed in a broader framework where political goodwill can be translated into permanent arrangements and allow the United Nations to provide its full contribution.

The end of the cold war and the decrease in tension between major nuclear powers have shown that nuclear deterrence as a concept of defence and security is no longer acceptable, if it ever was. The current talks of strategic arms limitations and other negotiations on the reduction of conventional weapons, while they remain crucial aspects of disarmament and have important implications for peace, should not be regarded any more as doomsday scenarios. On the contrary, their successful resolution should eventually contribute to improving the global security climate and encouraging initiative at regional level.

My delegation welcomes the inclusion on the agenda of a specific item on the regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security. For smaller States, this constitutes the best guarantee for peace and stability. Regional peace arrangements, however, cannot operate in a vacuum. They require, first of all, mutual agreement and political good will between regional partners, the support of extraregional Powers, and also the approval of the international community under the aegis of the United Nations.

While severe risks of conflict and confrontation may not exist in all regions of the globe, it would be wrong, however, to assume that a favourable international climate will necessarily ensure regional peace and stability.

(Mr. Peerthum, Mauritius)

Important efforts are being undertaken to create zones of peace, but they have yet to become reality and demonstrate our firm commitment to a regional system of security.

The capacity of nuclear armaments for destruction, the magnitude of the arms trade, and the increasingly disturbing correlation between the technological development of weapons and their accessibility should be enough to remind us that no region is immune from war.

Collective security arrangements remain therefore the safest road to peace and stability and to guarantees of good relations between neighbouring States.

In conclusion, let me say that I hope that our discussions during this session will bring us closer to this goal, and help build a better world.

Mr. KIBIDI NGOVUKA (Zaire) (interpretation from French): My delegation would like, first of all, to discharge the very pleasant duty of congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of our Commission. Your qualities as an experienced diplomat are known and appreciated by all, and there can be no doubt that you will guide our work with the competence we know that you possess. Allow me also to say to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Indonesia, how much we appreciate the skilled way in which he guided the work of our Commission.

The present session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place at a pivotal period in world history, characterized by the end of the cold war, the disappearance of rivalry between the super-Powers, the weakening of Marxist ideology, the irresistible rise of parliamentary-style democracy in the former peoples' and socialist democracies and in the countries of the third world, and the imminent advent of the twenty-first century.

(Mr. Kibidi Ngovuka, Zaire)

Since we are dealing here with disarmament issues, it seems to us appropriate to put our contribution to the general debate into the context of the recent war which pitted Iraq against the countries of the coalition which cooperated with Kuwait, a war during which sophisticated weapons were used, a war in which we saw a third-world country, Iraq, which had risen to become a military Power, lose despite a stockpile of weaponry of all types worth over $62 billion, which is an absolute record for the South since the Second World War.

This means that the issue of arms transfers and the arms trade is at the root of many conflicts which poison international relations. The more sophisticated weapons a country acquires, the more it yields to the temptation of trying to impose its will on another country. The annexation of Kuwait by Iraq is the most striking illustration of this.

By the same token, it is tempting for a country without enough military hardware to want to try to protect itself by having a heavy concentration of weapons on its territory. This is the kind of logic which promotes the arms trade and which arms manufacturers, in this case the industrialized countries, exploit to the full in order to boost their business.

If we see the issue in this light, we are obviously deluding ourselves if we think that we can put an end to the arms trade or, at the very least, reverse the trend towards excessive levels of arms. We believe that the antidote to this logic is to increase the numbers of zones of peace and nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, followed by a firm commitment by States to adhere to them and to observe all the undertakings and obligations resulting from the texts in force.

(Mr. Kibidi Ngoyuka, Zaire)

Concerning the Middle East, one of the world's most troubled regions, we think that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone is one of the conditions for peace in the region, without forgetting, of course, the Palestinian question, which must be resolved in a just manner, that is, through the creation of a Palestinian State with secure and internationally recognized frontiers. This need, which is both moral and political in nature, can be met through observance of resolution 242 (1967) of November 1967, which requests the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied territories.

The above issues are subsumed under the regional approach to disarmament within the context of world security.

My delegation is gratified by the American-Soviet dialogue and by their cooperation in the nuclear disarmament process. Indeed, we may recall here that the leaders of the United States of America and the Soviet Union agreed, in their joint statement made public in Geneva on 21 November 1985, that a nuclear war could not be won and should never be fought, and that in that same statement they came out in favour of rapid progress in those areas where there is common ground, specifically, in respect of the principle of a 50-per-cent reduction, by appropriate means, in the nuclear weapons held by the United States and the Soviet Union. In this context, we should take note of the joint statement the leaders of the two countries made on 1 June 1990 in Washington.

This desire to reduce nuclear weapons - legitimate as it is - should take into account the will of the international community to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons universal. Conventional or traditional arms, too, should be cut back. Indeed, new weapons technologies are rapidly rendering some supposedly effective weapons obsolete: we were made well

(Mr. Kibidi Ngovuka, Zaire)

aware of this during the Gulf war. The arms race is truly ruinous for some economies; it causes debt, putting a stranglehold on the economies of the third world, and even on the developed economies themselves.

I shall conclude my brief statement by quoting a passage from an article by George E. Brown:

"In the minds of many, the international community has now entered the so-called 'post-cold-war period'. While the precise character of this new era in global affairs remains unclear, the general outlines of a new world order are at least beginning to take shape.

Those outlines suggest that new developments in science and technology, which have in the past sparked new generations of offensive and defensive military systems and increased levels of military spending, will have a declining significance in regard to national security problems of a military nature. The use or threat of force in order to resolve a conflict at any level, from that of the super-Powers to regional or community levels, seems to have decreasing credibility. Science and technology will, however, play an increasing role in responding to both global economic and environmental concerns.

(Mr. Kibidi Ngovuka, Zaire)

"These two components of international security - economic security on the one hand and ecological security on the other - will become more and more interconnected. Given the limited resources of our planet, economic expansion - much of which is tied to advances in science and technology - will need to be viewed increasingly in terms of whether it is environmentally sustainable as well as economically beneficial." (Disarmament, Vol. XIII, No. 4, p. 34)

Mrs. Da SILVA-SUNIAGA (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election, as well as the other members of the Bureau. I also wish to assure you of my delegation's cooperation in the work that lies ahead for the Disarmament Commission.

Last year, the Disarmament Commission agreed to a radical reform in its methodology of work. We have no doubt that the changes introduced in document A/CN.10/137 will make the work of the Commission henceforth more fruitful than it was during the last decade. This is because the General Assembly, at its first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978, decided to renew its mandate so that it might discuss in depth selected items from the disarmament agenda, in order to be in a position to formulate principles and general guidelines for the negotiating activity of other bodies, in particular the Conference on Disarmament.

The fact that the Commission, beginning in 1991, will be subject to a specific work agenda limited to the thorough study of four substantive items at each session, and that each item will only remain on the work programme for three consecutive years, will prevent the Commission from diluting its efforts in unproductive debate, which would have risked turning the Disarmament Commission into another First Committee of the General Assembly, counter to the mandate assigned to it.

(Mrs. Da Silva-Suniaga, Venezuela)

Furthermore, countries which, like ours, have small delegations will be better able to take active part in the work of the Commission. However, we wish to take this opportunity to note that in the working timetable that was distributed yesterday in the informal paper CRP/1/Rev.1, no due account has been taken of the problem of the scarce human resources of some delegations, since Working Groups II and III on nuclear disarmament and regional disarmament have been scheduled for the same time periods. This means that it will be difficult for these delegations to follow both items adequately. As everyone can clearly see, these items are complementary within the logic of disarmament.

The current substantive session of the Commission is taking place at a time when the international community is looking for a broader system of international security, one that is multidimensional and interdependent and has clearly been proven necessary by the rapid and profound changes in the international political arena, including the recent conflict in the Persian Gulf.

That conflict clearly demonstrated that the best guarantee for the security of all States lies in compliance with the principles and norms of international law governing conduct among States, in particular the prohibition of the use of force as an instrument to resolve differences between them, and its corollary principle, the peaceful and negotiated resolution of conflicts.

It was also clearly seen that it is pointless for third-world countries to follow policies aimed at achieving an offensive military capability that is unwarranted given their basic needs for security and defence. The enormous expenditures this entails can only have a negative impact on the use

(Mrs. Da Silva-Suniaga, Venezuela)

of their scarce resources, which could be used for other priority areas. As in the recent case, it can also cause the death of many human beings, great material losses, and immeasurable ecological damage.

It is therefore necessary that, when adopting disarmament measures, due account be taken of their relationship to social and economic development matters and the protection of the environment.

We are also clearly seeing the problem of the illicit-weapons trade and how weapon surpluses arising from disarmament in certain regions can augment the inventory of others. At the same time, we believe that these transfers must be governed by norms based on ethical criteria to prevent the transfer of weapons that are excessive or unnecessary for the national defence of developing countries. That is why we wish publicly to show our appreciation to the Government of Canada for submitting a report on Canadian exports of military supplies. We believe that this example should be followed by all producing and selling States. We must here apply the criteria of transparency and openness that are so often mentioned with regard to the item on objective information on military matters. In that regard, we wish to repeat the message of President of Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez, to Congress this past March when he said:

> "This crisis showed the danger of the arms race, its futility and the risks entailed by these arsenals. No doubt, it dealt a hard blow on claims to weaponry and power by small- and medium-sized countries, which should provide food for thought for Latin American countries themselves".

Obviously, that conflict put before us the problems related to the military uses of scientific and technological advances, an area that is only now beginning to be examined. Therefore, including this item among the four

(Mrs. Da Silva-Suniaga, Venezuela)

substantive items of the Commission is most timely. The potential threats to international security of replacing the quantitative arms race by the qualitative are becoming clearer. It would be disgraceful for our peoples if, in pursuit of an illusory security, we were to begin to compete in procuring these new weapons which scientific and technological progress have generously put before us and whose effectiveness, unfortunately, we have experienced in the conflict in the South Atlantic and, most recently and to greater effect, in the Gulf War.

We are also resolute in our conviction that the regional approach to disarmament should be given greater attention, but not at the expense of the essential guidelines that may lead to general and complete disarmament. We believe that the global and regional approaches to disarmament are complementary and may be used simultaneously. We therefore consider it very timely to establish, for the first time in the Commission, a Working Group that will carefully analyse that item with a view to preparing specific recommendations that may, within a broad scheme of regional security, lead to specific disarmament measures.

In that context, we wish to express our satisfaction with political developments in Europe, which are making possible the development of other institutions and mechanisms based on democratic principles essential for building a new system of security in this region. This was clearly reflected as a first step in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and in the Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States adopted at the summit meeting of Heads of State or Government of the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), held in November 1990 in Paris.

(Mrs. Da Silva-Suniaga, Venezuela)

With reference to the item on objective information on military matters, which was considered last year by the Commission on a preliminary basis, we believe that this is one of the disarmament issues that better lend themselves to a regional approach in terms of negotiations towards the establishment of confidence-building measures. However, there is no doubt that this body could offer its wisdom with regard to the implementation of regional schemes for the exchange of military information.

(Mrs. da Silva-Suniaga, Venezuela)

Once again the Disarmament Commission will be studying nuclear disarmament. In connection with this agenda item, which has the greatest scope of all the items on the disarmament agenda, my delegation wishes to say that in our opinion, and notwithstanding the progress made in this area, the subject continues to have the highest priority, as stated by the General Assembly in the 1978 Final Document.

We therefore expect the early conclusion of the strategic arms reduction treaty (START) and a continuation of the process of additional reductions in such weapons. However, we regret that the recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Amendment Conference on the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, held since the Disarmament Commission's last session, concluded their work without fulfilling our expectations. We continue to believe that the maintenance and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime with a view to its being made universal and remaining in effect after 1995 are closely related to halting and reversing the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament and to the need to hold urgent negotiations culminating in the signing of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty.

The CHAIRMAN: We have thus completed the first phase of the work of the Commission for this session, namely, the general exchange of views. During this phase a total of 30 speakers made general statements on various items on the agenda.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, 24 April, the Commission will begin the second phase of its work, in which all four Working Groups will start their deliberations

(The Chairman)

on respective agenda items. In this connection, as indicated in the general programme of work, a plenary meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. in the afternoon of Monday, 29 April 1991, to receive the progress reports of the Working Groups.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.